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ABSTRACT

A multiphase program (Delinquency Intervention Program in the Carbondale Community High School), aimed at developing and defining means of identifying and reorienting delinquent-prone youths in a high school-community setting, has used university graduate students as "Big Brother" type counselors to work with delinquent prone youths and to effect appropriate behavior changes in them. Concurrent research relevant to the practice itself has provided promising implications for the construction of a curriculum of training for professional careers in correction, rehabilitation, and education, and has demonstrated that this kind of activity provides a valuable learning experience for students preparing for careers in these and related areas. The basic principles used are those of differential reinforcement to bring about behavior modification, with the aim of making delinquent-prone high school students more competent to deal with their environment by correcting behavioral deficits. Results obtained by this program suggest that stating students' problems in behavioral terms and defining events in terms of their function could result in benefits both to the educational system as a whole and to individual students by allowing those involved to become more attuned to the realities of the situation. (SA)

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SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY AT CARBONDALE

A GUIDANCE PARADIGM FOR DISADVANTAGED HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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A GUIDANCE PARADIGM FOR DISADVANTAGED HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS[1]

By Richard Pooley
SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

The Illinois Department of Public Instruction is supporting a project titled "Delinquency Intervention Program in the Carbondale Community High School" (Pooley, 1969). The project is operating under the aegis of the Center for the Study of Crime, Delinquency and Corrections, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale and the Carbondale Community High School. A brief description of the project is presented here together with an example of a specific case strategy and some speculation on the future of the project.

The project is a multi-phase program aimed at developing and defining means of identifying and re-orienting delinquent-prone youths in a high school-community setting. The project design follows the "Practice as Research" model (Goldiamond, Dyrud, & Miller, 1965): using university graduate students as "Big Brother" type counselors to work with delinquent-prone youths, efforts were made to effect appropriate behavioral changes in the subject population; concurrently, certain research procedures were employed which produced

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[1]A paper presented at the American Personnel and Guidance Association, New Orleans, Louisiana, March 25, 1970.

data relevant to the practice itself and provide promising implications for the construction of a curriculum of training for professional careers in corrections, rehabilitation, and education. The objectives of both the "practice" and "research" aspects of the project model were advanced.

The graduate students were selected from various disciplines of the behavioral and social sciences and from the arts as well.

They received instruction in some counseling techniques based on the Experimental Analysis of Behavior (Skinner, 1954; Malott and Whaley, 1968), Reality Therapy (Glasser, 1965), Adlerian Psychology (Dreikurs and Soltz, 1964; Dreikurs, 1957) and the Development of Human Potential (Dreger, 1968).

The graduate student counselors experimented with various procedures. These counselors were trained in appropriate reporting methods and in methods of marshalling community resources to further delinquency intervention objectives. In addition to the rehabilitative benefits extended to the high school students, evidence emerged that this kind of activity can be a valuable learning experience for students preparing for careers in corrections, vocational counseling, education, or community agency work.

The case presented here is generally based on the principles of behavior modification and is specifically concerned

with increasing the frequency of certain desirable behaviors that are deficient in the subject. I wish to emphasize here that we regard behavior therapy as techniques appropriate to certain kinds of problems. We do not regard it as necessarily appropriate to all or even most of the cases we encounter. As was pointed out earlier a variety of alternative guidance approaches are used in this project. An approach is chosen in accordance with the problems involved and the resources that are available.

Generally speaking the terminal objective of this project is to make delinquent-prone high school students more competent to deal with their environment. Primary emphasis is placed on competencies relevant to the educational and/or vocational environment.

Often a student who is delinquent-prone is suffering from critical behavioral deficits. For example, he may lack certain basic behaviors that are prerequisite to success in an educational environment or a vocational environment as well. The case to be presented is an example of such an individual. The case illustrates an intelligent use of differential reinforcement to shape and maintain a desired behavior.

The graduate student assigned to this case holds a B. A. in Anthropology and Sociology and is presently working toward a masters degree in elementary education. She is 25 years old and has had practical experience as a child care counselor in a small treatment center for emotionally disturbed children in

British Columbia. She has been a library assistant at the University of British Columbia and in London, Great Britain. She has also had prior experience in various vocations (i.e. waitress, cashier, retail foods, child care). This graduate student started working for this project on February 15, 1969. She was assigned to the following case shortly thereafter. (McAleer, 1969)

Case (L.E.)

Linda is a 16 year old freshman who lives in a "depressed" socio-economic environment. She lives with her mother (divorced) and five siblings: three sisters ages 18, 14 and 12 years; two brothers, ages 8 and 3 years.

The family moved from Arkansas to Illinois 3 or 4 years ago. Linda was referred to this project because "she cannot relate to her peers and is often an outcast". Frequently she was the victim of abuse (name calling, rock throwing, etc.) from some of her fellow students. These situations were disrupting to the school environment, and to Linda's development. She was enrolled in a special education curriculum of the Carbondale Community High School.

The preliminary examination of Linda's school record revealed that there was frequent concern regarding Linda's personal hygiene. Evidence concerning this problem dated back at least three years. On several occasions the family was contacted by a school or a social agent to discuss the hygiene problem. For three years, little or no improvement was observed as a result of the procedure.

It was hypothesized that in order for Linda to succeed in school, in a vocation, or at inter-personal relationships, she must learn to improve her personal hygiene habits. Accordingly, the counselor set as an objective to increase and improve Linda's grooming behavior. The criterion for successful performance centered on three aspects of grooming (i.e. the care and cleanliness of hair, teeth, and fingernails). Bathing did not constitute a problem; Linda showered each day in her P.E. class. The counselor instructed Linda on the importance of grooming and methods of grooming. On several occasions the counselor accompanied Linda on a visit to the Vocational and Technical Institute of SIU. There they visited the Dental Technicians Laboratory and school and the Cosmetology school. During these visits Linda had her teeth examined and cleaned. She had her hair fixed, and was instructed on a variety of topics concerning personal hygiene and health.

During the entire counseling relationship, the counselor administered positive reinforcement (social approval) when there was evidence of a significant improvement in Linda's grooming behavior. When no evidence of grooming was apparent, the counselor withheld social approval (and attention) as a consequence of grooming neglect. This defines the procedure of differential reinforcement (i.e. reinforcing behaviors you wish to strengthen; ignoring behaviors you wish to attenuate). Concurrently, Linda was consistently (but subtly) instructed in ways to improve her grooming habits. This strategy was used throughout the counseling relationship.

A method was devised to measure Linda's grooming behavior. During each session, Linda was rated by the counselor for showing evidence of grooming behavior. If Linda showed evidence of grooming in one or more of the 3 criteria, she would earn points in accordance with her grooming effort. No evidence of grooming--zero; moderate evidence of grooming--one point; evidence of acceptable grooming--two points. Consequently, during a single session Linda could earn anywhere from zero to six points, contingent upon her appearance. These data were recorded for each session on a matrix (illustrated below).

EVIDENCE OF GROOMING

	NONE 0 POINTS	MODERATE 1 POINT	ACCEPTABLE 2 POINTS
HAIR			
TEETH			
NAILS			

FIGURE 1
MATRIX TO RECORD GROOMING POINTS (CASE 1)

After an initial baseline period whereby Linda's appearance was observed and recorded with no attempt to modify her appearance, the procedure of differential reinforcement was applied.

The results of this procedure are plotted on a graph. Grooming points earned are plotted on the abscissa; sessions are plotted on the ordinate. Linda could earn a maximum of 6 points for a ceptable appearance during any single session. Results are plotted below.

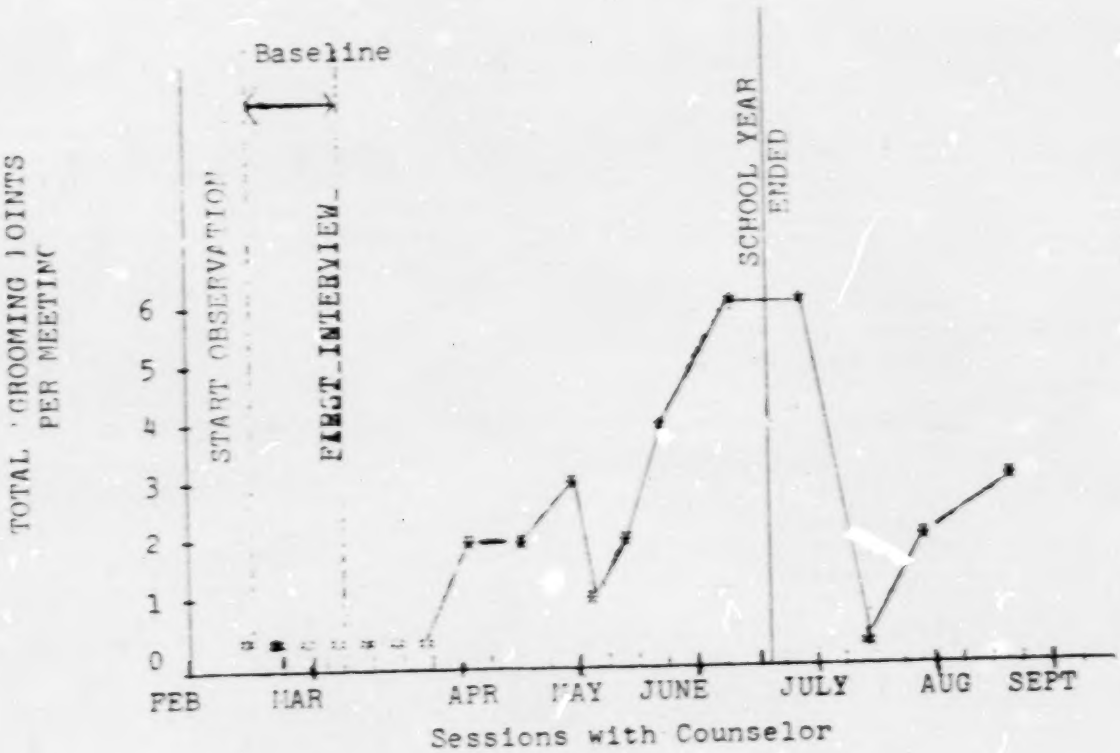

FIGURE 2

GROOMING POINTS PLOTTED AS A FUNCTION OF COUNSELING SESSIONS

These data show that Linda's grooming behavior with respect to the criteria stated was shaped and maintained in less than 3 months. The July session indicates that the behavior rapidly deteriorated. This phenomenon merits some discussion.

The period between March 17 and May 2 was spent in shaping Linda's grooming behavior with the use of social approval as a positive reinforcer. Concurrently, Linda was being instructed in grooming methods. By early May, Linda had, in her repertoire, the basic skills required to perform the grooming behavior. Accordingly, on May 2nd the counselor presented to Linda a transaction in the form of a contingency rule. The counselor stated:

> In the next 4 weeks I want to see a significant improvement in the care of your teeth, nails and hair. If you show a definite improvement we will do something special. (i.e. attend an event of your choice)

From the time the contingency rule was stated (May 2), the chart indicates a steady increase in Linda's grooming behavior. On June 9, the counselor took Linda and her family to a country music event. Grooming behavior had reached the maximum, according to the grooming criteria. This maximum level was maintained for at least two weeks. Then the behavior dropped off to zero during the interval between June 21st and July 18th.

Why did this happen? It happened because Linda is a human being and she was behaving in accordance with the laws that govern human behavior. Grooming behavior was being maintained by the counselor's use of positive reinforcement (social approval) for acceptable grooming behavior. Circumstances were such that the counselor was unable to see Linda during interval between June 21 and July 18. Linda's grooming behavior dropped to zero during this period simply because there was nothing in the environment to maintain the grooming behavior; consequently, the behavior extinguished. When asked why she allowed her grooming to become slack, Linda replied that she "doesn't see anybody so she doesn't bother." Obviously, in her home environment events which tend to maintain grooming behavior are absent.

Now the counselor's task was to reshape the grooming behavior, then discover ways in which the grooming behavior can be maintained by the ongoing environment. The counselor must instruct others in the environment to apply the necessary social approval so that Linda's grooming behavior will be maintained and generalized to most environmental settings. With this established, Linda will have, in her repertoire, one of the most fundamental pre-requisite behaviors necessary for success in school and work as well. The counselor has already reshaped the grooming behavior and is currently working on certain social skills so that Linda can land and hold a summer job.

DISCUSSION: In examining this case some interesting questions arose regarding the problem solving capability of school systems. For example, in this Case, the subject manifested a problem concerning hygiene. Evidence of this problem dated back at least three years. The procedure that the various school systems had elected to solve the problem was an interview with the student involved and her parents. They attempted to "convince" the parents and the subject that she should improve her hygiene behavior. Apparently, at no time in this subject's history did the authorities involved realize that their problem-solving procedure wasn't working. Had they recognized the reality of the situation, they may have abandoned the ineffective procedure in favor of other problem-solving techniques. Had they experimented with the problem, they may have discovered an answer. There seems to be a "reality-gap. The reason why many people never realize what is happening is partly due to the way they interpret environmental events. For example, in the same case at one point the counselor met with several of the subject's teachers to ascertain if they had noticed any improvement in the subject. The counselor's questions were answered with statements like 'Yes, the subject is much nicer.' In attempting to measure the progress the subject is making, comments such as the foregoing are well nigh useless. A far better way of interpreting the environmental events would be for the teachers to state the events which lead them to believe that the subject's "attitude" has improved. What behaviors are apparent that lead the teacher to speculate that the subject is 'nicer'? These are

examples of behavioral questions--questions that can be answered in observable terms. When one learns to define environmental events in terms of their function, one becomes more attuned to the realities of the situation. A second example of the "reality-gap" follows.

An examination of the subjects' cumulative school records revealed that such records abound with confusing and non-functional terminology. In one case, the student had been "diagnosed" by a variety of school authorities. Over the years this student was labeled with various diagnoses ranging from "retarded" to above average. Other records labeled some students with clinical terms such as paranoid, manic, etc. Such labeling is a disservice to the student and to any investigator who is attempting to correct an environmental dysfunction through systematic procedure. Behavioral data are far more useful in this regard.

The educational system, and its students as well, will probably benefit greatly if we begin to regard the learning process <u>experimentally</u> and begin to interpret the environment <u>functionally</u>. Education must become more scientific. A quote lifted from <u>The Book</u> (Watts, 1966) provides sound counsel to the educator at any level:

> The man behind the mocroscope
> Has this advice for you:
> "Instead of asking what it is,
> Just ask, 'What does it do?'"

The Future Strategies

Our experience with this project has given support to the concept of Differential Treatment. In our work we have attempted to tailor a specific program to meet the unique needs of each subject. Others have tested the concept as well. The California Youth Authority has done extensive work with Differential Treatment with regard to delinquent sub-classes and treatment settings (Palmer 1969). The National Training School for Boys and the Robert F. Kennedy Youth Center has tested the concept with regard to matching subject and counselor according to personality sub-types. (Gerard 1969) Most of the Differential Treatment literature seems to be promising.

Accordingly, we hope to use this information to an advantage by designing future projects that will test the variation in effectiveness of several kinds of Differential Treatment strategies in a community setting.

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